

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A document management system for transmitting a code contained in a physical document from a client computer to a server to retrieve an electronic version of the physical document from the server, comprising:

client software residing on the client computer operative to receive and transmit a code relating to a physical document to a server connected to a client computer by way of a network;

a database accessible by the server for retrieving an electronic address of the electronic version of the physical document by relating the code to the electronic address; and

server software residing on the server operable to receive the code transmitted by the client software via the network and retrieve from the database an electronic address of the electronic version of the physical documents related to the code.

2. The system of claim 1, wherein the electronic version of the physical document is stored in a network location accessible to the server and is managed by the client software.

3. The system of claim 1, wherein the client software is further configured to retrieve an electronic version of the physical document from the electronic address provided by the server software.

4. The system of claim 1, wherein the code is a barcode.

5. The system of claim 1, wherein the code is a legible numeric code.

6. The system of claim 1, wherein said network comprises one of a LAN, a WAN, a VPN, a wireless network, or the Internet

7. The system of claim 1, further comprising a device for acquiring the code.

8. The system of claim 7, wherein the device comprises a data input device.

9. The system of claim 8, wherein the data input device comprises a personal digital assistant (PDA).

10. The system of claim 8, wherein the data input device comprises a scanner.

11. The system of claim 10, wherein the scanner comprises a barcode scanner.

12. The system of claim 10, wherein the data input device comprises a keyfob.

13. The system of claim 8, wherein the data input device comprises a telephone.

14. The system of claim 7, wherein the code received by the client software residing on the client computer is received from the device for acquiring the code.

15. The system of claim 1, wherein the database resides on the server.

16. The system of claim 1, wherein the client software resides on a network gateway computer.

17. The system of claim 1, wherein the client software resides on the server.

18. The system of claim 1, wherein the server software is further configured to process electronic documents on the basis of keywords and meta information.

19. The system of claim 1, wherein the server software is configured to track metrics of users.

20. The system of claim 19, wherein the server software is configured to update user profiles according to the user metrics.

21. The system of claim 2, wherein a user may view, share, and send the electronic version of the physical document.

22. A method of managing electronic versions of physical documents comprising the steps of:

mapping a code to an electronic address of an electronic version of a physical document;

acquiring a code relating to a physical document;

finding the electronic address of an electronic version of the physical document relating to the code;

transmitting the electronic address to a user;

maintaining the electronic version of the physical document; and

using the code as a proxy to the electronic version of the physical document.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising the step of transferring the obtained document code to a client computer.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising the step of processing the acquired code using software on a client computer.

25. The method of claim 22, further comprising a step of transmitting the obtained code related to physical document to a server, which performs the step of finding.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein the server performs the step of finding by way of an electronic database relating codes associated with physical documents to electronic addresses of electronic versions of the physical documents.

27. The method of claim 22, further comprising the steps of:

indicating recipients to receive copies of the electronic address associated with the electronic version of the physical document associated with a code; and transmitting the electronic address to each designated recipient.

28. The method of claim 27, further comprising the step of transmitting a message to each recipient regarding the transmitted electronic address.

29. The method of claim 22, wherein the electronic address comprises a URL.

30. The method of claim 22, wherein the electronic address transmitted to a user is stored in a user account.

31. The method of claim 30, wherein the user account allows for customized organization of each electronic address stored in the user account.

32. A method for creating an electronic document from a physical document for later review by a user by way of an electronic address related to the electronic document, comprising the steps of:

generating markup language that represents the physical document;

creating an electronic document that is an electronic version of the physical document from the markup language;

generating markup language annotation information regarding the contents of the physical document to be placed in the electronic document;

generating an electronic address related to a network location of the electronic document; and

publishing the electronic document to the network location.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein the electronic address of each document is maintained in a database accessible by a server.

34. The method of claim 32, wherein the database relates each electronic address to a code located on each physical document associated with the electronic document represented by the document electronic address.

35. The method of claim 32, wherein the markup language annotation information comprises meta data regarding the physical document.

36. The method of claim 35, wherein the meta data is stored in extensible markup language (XML) fragments within the electronic document.

37. The method of claim 32, wherein the electronic address comprises a URL.

38. The method of claim 32, further comprising the steps of:
reading the electronic document;
searching the electronic document for annotation information contained therein; and
determining from the annotation information, details of the electronic document.

39. The method of claim 38, wherein the annotation information comprises meta data.

40. The method of claim 39, wherein the annotation information is encoded using extensible markup language (XML).

41. The method of claim 38, wherein the electronic document comprises a markup language encoded version of the physical document.

42. The method of claim 41, wherein the markup language encoded version of the physical document comprises an HTML-encoded document.

43. The method of claim 38, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a code from a physical document; and

comparing the details of the code contained in the annotation information of the electronic document with the code received from the physical document.

44. The method of claim 43, further comprising the step of:

validating the code received from the physical document, if, during the step of comparing, it is determined that the code contained in the annotation information of the electronic document and the code received from the physical document are the same.

45. The method of claim 38, wherein the electronic document is received from a publisher.

46. A method for creating, upon a physical document, a unique code corresponding to information contained in an electronic version of the physical document, comprising the steps of:

acquiring a unique code corresponding to information contained in an electronic version of a physical document presented as an electronic document;

printing the code on the physical document;

generating annotation information regarding the contents of the physical document to be placed in the electronic document; and

maintaining a correspondence between the code and information contained in the electronic document by storing the annotation information within the electronic document.

47. The method of claim 46, wherein the annotation information comprises meta information.

48. The method of claim 47, wherein the annotation information is contained in markup language fragments within the document.

49. The method of claim 48, wherein the markup language fragments comprise XML fragments.

50. A method of electronically publishing an index to a publication while preserving the structure of the physical document and providing links to a plurality of electronic documents, comprising the steps of:

receiving an electronic index corresponding to the plurality of electronic documents;

parsing the electronic index;

locating in the electronic index, a plurality of electronic addresses corresponding to the electronic documents; and

using the electronic index to identify a larger unit of publication relating to many smaller units of publication.

51. The method of claim 50, wherein the plurality of electronic addresses is stored in a database.

52. The method of claim 51, wherein the plurality of addresses stored in the database are related to corresponding physical documents using a mapping function.

53. The method of claim 52, wherein the mapping function relates a code contained in the physical document with the electronic address of the corresponding electronic document.

54. The method of claim 50, wherein the plurality of electronic addresses are stored together in an electronic index format.

55. The method of claim 54, wherein the electronic index format comprises a hypertext markup language (HTML) format.

56. A method of associating meta information with an electronic document within a document management system, comprising the steps of:

- analyzing the electronic document;
- determining keywords associated with the electronic document;
- storing the keywords as meta information in an electronic form;
- storing the keywords as meta information within the document management system; and
- tailoring presentation of the electronic document to a user according to stored meta information relating to the electronic document.

57. The method of claim 56, wherein the keywords are stored in a database.

58. The method of claim 56, wherein the meta information is stored as markup language fragments within the electronic document.

59. The method of claim 58, wherein the markup language fragments comprise extensible markup language (XML) fragments.

60. The method of claim 56, wherein the electronic document is formatted in a hypertext markup language (HTML) format.

61. The method of claim 56, wherein the electronic document is formatted as a text document.

62. The method of claim 56, wherein the stored meta information is supplied by a third party.

63. The method of claim 62, wherein the stored meta information is supplied by a publisher.

64. An electronic document sharing system, comprising:
a physical document containing a unique code relating the physical document to a corresponding electronic document;
means for reading the unique code from the physical document;
means for retrieving the electronic document related to the physical document;
means for manipulating the electronic document; and
means for tracking usage associated with manipulating the electronic document.

65. The system of claim 64, wherein the means for manipulating the electronic document comprises a means for electronically sending the code associated with the electronic document to a plurality of users.

66. The system of claim 65, wherein said means for electronically sending comprises a means for sending an e-mail message.

67. The system of claim 66, wherein the means for tracking usage comprises tracking one of a user's communication, file transferring, file sharing, or link following.

68. The system of claim 66, wherein the means for tracking usage tracks e-mail addresses of the plurality of users.

69. The system of claim 68, wherein the means for electronically sending an e-mail message comprises a means for sending a follow-up e-mail message to the plurality of users regarding the code sent to the plurality of users.

70. The system of claim 69, wherein user statistics are maintained by the means for tracking usage for each of the plurality of users according to the e-mail addresses of the plurality of users.

71. The system of claim 70, wherein the user statistics are stored in a user profile.

72. The system of claim 71, further comprising:
means for analyzing statistics stored in the user profile.

73. A method for relating a physical document to an electronic version of the document via a code printed on the physical document, comprising the steps of:

selecting a unique code for a physical document;

relating the unique code to an electronic version of the physical document;

and

updating the code;

wherein a first entity performs the following steps:

selects the unique code;

prints the physical document;

sends the code to a second entity; and

authorizes the second entity to update information regarding the code;

and

wherein the second entity receives the code from the first entity and updates a database entry regarding the code.

74. The method of claim 73, wherein the second entity updates the database by updating meta information in the database corresponding to the code.

75. The method of claim 73, wherein the second entity updates the database by updating uniform resource locator (URL) information in the database corresponding to the code.

76. An electronic document sharing system, comprising:
means for sending electronic links to documents to one or more users;
means for identifying the one or more users receiving the electronic links by a unique identifier; and
means for the one or more users to retrieve the documents in electronic format via the electronic links.

77. The system of claim 76, wherein the unique identifier is an e-mail address.

78. The system of claim 76, further comprising:
means for storing the electronic links sent to each recipient according to recipient;
means for determining if each recipient has a system account; and

means for providing each recipient having a system account with access to the electronic links sent to each recipient by way of each recipient's respective system account.

79. The system of claim 78, further comprising:

means for determining that a new user, upon registration for a system account, has previously been a recipient of one or more electronic links, and for providing the new user with access to the one or more electronic links.

80. A method for transmitting electronic codes relating to electronic documents between computer users, comprising the steps of:

A first computer user sending an electronic code to one or more recipients;

identifying the recipients by way of a unique identifier;

storing each recipient's unique identifier; and

storing each code sent to each of the one or more recipients according to the unique identifier of each corresponding recipient.

81. The method of claim 80, wherein the unique identifier is an e-mail address.

82. The method of claim 80, wherein the electronic code is represented by a uniform resource locator (URL).

83. The method of claim 80, further comprising the steps of:
determining if the recipients have an account by way of the unique identifier of each recipient; and
providing each recipient that has an account with access to the code sent by way of each recipient's individual account.

84. The method of claim 80, further comprising the steps of:
registering a new user;
determining whether or not the new user has previously been a recipient of an electronic code by comparing the new user's unique identifier with the stored recipient identifiers; and
if the new user has previously been a recipient, making the code previously sent to the new user available by way of an account provided to the new user upon registration.